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THE IMPRISONMENT OF COLLABORATORS AS EXPERIMENT
FOR PENITENTIARY MODERNISATION

The prison system in Belgium and the Netherlands between 1946 and 1950

During the Liberation in 1944-45, tens of thousands of Belgian and Dutch collaborators were imprisoned. The prisons were not built to hold so many prisoners and a good deal of improvisation was needed. From 1945, a group of penitentiary professionals consisting of among others lawyers and criminologists concerned themselves with the problem. It was soon clear to them that the collaborators needed to be 'reeducated' to prevent them becoming pariahs in post-war society. To this purpose, the *Dienst Wederopvoeding Reclassering en Voogdij* (DWRV) was founded in Belgium and the *Stichting Toezicht Politieke Delinquenten* (STPD) in the Netherlands.

The question which arose most frequently with respect to these resocialisation organisations was whether the 'reeducation' was successful. From the point of view that 'reeducation' is not a goal in itself, this article poses different questions as to the impact of the work of the DWRV and the STPD. Central are the Dutch and Belgian professionals who were involved in the resocialisation of collaborators and in particular their penological discourse. Attention is also given to the consequences of their policies on the existing penitentiary practices, because it was precisely during the 'reeducation' of collaborators that penitentiary policies changed.

The intended resocialisation of the collaborators could however not take place in the existing prison system. Prison policies were at that time not fully aimed at resocialisation: punishment mostly equalled retribution and individual internment was common practice. This was not the view of the penitentiary professionals discussed in this article who pleaded for modernisation.

The comparison between Belgium and the Netherlands shows how much the pursuit of modernization happened simultaneous. At the same time, the different backgrounds of the professional groups concerned was striking. The importance of these different ideological backgrounds becomes clear when taking a close look at the views on 'good' citizenship.